

WASHINGTON DC – Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer (MD) made the following statement today on the House floor in opposition to Republican energy legislation and in favor of the Democratic substitute:

“The American people are being pummeled at the pump by high gas prices – and they’re being told to brace themselves for record heating costs this winter. And what is this House Majority doing to reduce consumers’ pain? Absolutely nothing!

“Let us be clear: This Republican bill is not a panacea or even a plan. It’s pure pretense.

“But don’t take my word for it. Just listen to the Republican Chairman of the House Science Committee, the gentleman from New York (Mr. Boehlert). After the Rules Committee reported the manager’s amendment late last night, Mr. Boehlert wrote in a Dear Colleague letter (and I quote):

‘Please join me in voting no on H.R. 3893, which will increase the deficit, harm the environment, undermine the states, and give charity to the oil companies while doing virtually nothing to help consumers.’

“It is clear that this Republican Majority is exploiting the disruption to our nation’s refining capacity caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita to push many of the same provisions that were dropped from the Energy Policy Act that we passed in July.

“This Republican bill, for example, would create a fund that would pay oil companies if they are sued – even if they lose in court. It would enable cities with dirty air to delay meeting Clean Air requirements. And it would preempt state and local zoning regulations related to the siting of refineries.

“What do these provisions have to do with reducing gas prices today?

“In sharp contrast, the Democratic substitute would put some bite in the Federal Trade

Commission's bark. It would give the FTC explicit authority to stop price gouging – not just for gasoline and diesel fuels, but for natural gas, home heating oil and propane.

“It provides for enhanced penalties for price gouging; explicitly outlaws market manipulation; and empowers state attorneys generals to enforce the federal law. Furthermore, the substitute would establish a strategic refinery reserve to help ensure that our nation is protected from supply disruptions.

“The fact is, our national security and economic strength are susceptible to private-industry decisions that are motivated primarily by profit – not national security. This Congress has a duty to address this vulnerability.

“I urge my colleagues: Vote against the underlying bill, and for the Democratic substitute.”

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